

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

EB-07 /070 W

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R 241103Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 508

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 7187

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, CB

SUBJ: SOVIET REACTION TO MAYAGUEZ

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET RESPONSE TO THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT WAS SO CONSPICUOUSLY CAUTIOUS THAT IT SUGGESTS A CONSCIOUS POLICY DECISION TO AVOID USING THE ISSUE AS A HANDLE TO CRITICIZE THE U.S. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FALL OF INDOCHINA. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SOVIET PRESS REPORTED THE EVENTS AS THEY HAPPENED WITH SOME DETAIL BUT WITHOUT SHARP RHETORIC. WHEN THE OPERATION WAS OVER, THE MEDIA REPLAYED THE CAMBODIAN LINE ON WHAT HAD HAPPENED, BUT CONCENTRATED MORE ON THE TAHI REACTION AND THE DAMAGE TO U.S.-THAI RELATIONS. MOSCOW CONSPICUOUSLY FAILED TO ISSUE ANY KIND OF
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STATEMENT OR EVEN A SIGNED COMMENTARY ON THE EVENTS, WHICH SUGGESTS

A CLEAR DECISION NOT TO BERATE THE U.S. DIRECTLY ON THIS ISSUE.

3. U.S. PROFESSOR GASTON SIGUR, HEAD OF GEORGE WASHINGTON SINO-SOVIET INSTITUTE, WHO HAS BEEN IN MOSCOW AS GUEST OF THE USA INSTITUTE, TOLD DCM ON MAY 21 THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY SOVIET HE SPOKE WITH SAID THAT THE U.S. HAD "DONE WHAT IT HAD TO" IN THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT AND THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FOOLISH TO EXPECT ANY OTHER APPROACH.

4. COMMENT: THIS SOVIET TREATMENT WAS MOTIVATED, IN OUR VIEW, BY THE SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS EVENT AS WELL AS BY THE LARGER CONSIDERATION OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. THEY PRESUMABLY SAW NO REASON TO TAKE THE U.S. ON IN CONNECTION WITH AN EVENT WHICH WAS MARGINAL TO THEIR OWN INTERESTS AND WHICH THEY COULD NOT HAVE AFFECTED ANYWAY. LIKEWISE, THEIR APPARENT ABSENCE OF TIES TO THE NEW CAMBODIAN REGIME SUGGESTS THAT THEY MIGHT SEE SOME VIRTUE IN "TEACHING" PHNOM PENH THAT IT NEEDS MORE FRIENDS THAN HANOI AND PEKING. THE PUBLICITY FOR THE U.S. DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS VIA THE CHINESE ALSO SUGGESTS THAT EITHER PEKING WAS UNABLE TO AFFECT THE OUTCOME (I.E., LACKS CLOUT WITH THE CAMBODIANS) OR CHOSE NOT TO AFFECT IT (I.E., DOES NOT VALUE SUFFICIENTLY ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.). BOTH POINTS SERVE SOVIET INTERESTS IN TREATING THE CHINESE INVIDIOUSLY. FINALLY, ON THE QUESTION OF THE SHIP'S POSITION AT THE TIME OF ITS SEIZURE, MOSCOW CLEARLY WISHED TO AVOID TAKING A POSITION WHICH COULD BACKFIRE ON ITS OWN LOS POSITION ON INNOCENT PASSAGE. SOME SOVIET MEDIA REPLAYED THE CAMBODIAN CHARGE ABOUT THE ALLEGED "INTELLIGENCE" FUNCTIONS OF THE MAYAGUEZ, BUT EVEN THIS WAS CAREFULLY COUCHED AS THE OPINION OF OTHERS. STOESEL

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